National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
California

General Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1 of 2

Final

General Management Plan

&

Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1 of 2

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

~ California ~

JULY, 2002

United States Department of the Interior – National Park Service

Final General Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, California

This *General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* describes and analyzes five alternatives for managing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The approved plan will provide a framework for managing development, visitation, and natural and cultural resources for the next 15 to 20 years. Some issues to be addressed include impacts to natural and cultural resources caused by development, growing visitation and demand for outdoor recreation, lack of public transportation to and within the national recreation area, and increasing awareness about the national recreation area among residents of the metropolitan Los Angeles area.

The **no action alternative** provides a baseline for evaluating the environmental effects of the other alternatives. Current management practices would continue unchanged. Park managers would provide for visitor use and respond to natural and cultural resource management concerns according to current policy and legal requirements as funding allowed. About 30 percent of parkland would be designated low intensity. The **preferred alternative** incorporates the exceptional elements of the following three alternatives. Significant natural and cultural resources would be protected while providing compatible recreation and educational programs to a diverse public. About 80 percent of parkland would be designated low intensity. A Trail Management Plan would be prepared to address development and management of the trail system. Small pockets of concentrated high intensity activities would be located in nonsensitive or previously developed areas. Emphasis in the **preservation alternative** would be on preserving natural and cultural systems. About 80 percent of parkland would be designated low intensity. Some park-related development would be removed in sensitive areas. More educational exhibits would provide people with information about natural and cultural resources. Visitors would have the opportunity to visit, explore, and learn about the park through a variety of virtual "visitor centers" and informational Web sites. These alternative experiences would preserve resources by increasing appreciation and understanding. The emphasis in the **education alternative** would be on developing stronger environmental and cultural education programs. The NPS would work with local school districts and other education partners to deliver an outdoor experience to every child in Los Angeles. About 80 percent of parkland would be designated low intensity. All proposed facilities would have a strong educational emphasis. Overnight educational camps would be available to groups. People would understand and value the ecosystem through interactive educational programs using cutting-edge technology. In the **recreation alternative** the emphasis would be on maximizing recreation with new park development concentrated in nonsensitive or previously disturbed areas. A broader dispersion of outdoor recreational facilities would be provided without jeopardizing the long-term preservation of natural and cultural resources. About 65 percent of the park would be designated as moderate intensity. Facilities would be improved and/or expanded to accommodate growing demand, and existing wilderness areas would be protected.

Due to the general nature of the analysis presented, the types of environmental impacts for each of the five alternatives is fairly similar. They differ in the intensity and location of visitor uses relative to sensitive resources and required level of park management. The recreation alternative has the highest number of facility developments; however, most of these facilities are located in high-use areas and away from sensitive resources.

The public review period on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* ended May 31, 2001. This final document includes the results of the public comment on the draft document. The no-action period on this final plan and environmental impact statement will end 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency has accepted the document and published a notice of availability in the *Federal Register*. For further information, write to Superintendent, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, 401 Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360, telephone 805-370-2300, or e-mail www.nps.gov/samo.

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The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is a cooperative effort by the National Park Service, California State Parks, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, as well as private land owners, and city and county governments.

▲ *View of Santa Monica Mountains (NPS photo).*

SUMMARY

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is one of the world's largest urban recreation areas. The Mediterranean-type ecosystem of this open space preserve northwest of Los Angeles offers visitors a multitude of natural, cultural and recreational experiences. Its more than 150,000 acres of mountains, valleys and coastline are surrounded by a megalopolis of 17 million people, yet 90 percent of the land is free of development.

The SMMNRA is home to significant archeological and cultural sites and provides a haven for more than 450 animal species. More than 20 federal or state-listed threatened or endangered plants and animals find protection here. Another 46 animal and 11 plant species are federal or state species of concern. At least 1,000 archeological sites are located within the recreation area boundaries. Three structures are listed on, and more than 73 archeological/historic sites are potentially eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places.

The U.S. Congress created the SMMNRA in 1978 and granted the National Park Service the authority to promote a level of shared management for the park. The National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy jointly administer the public parklands within the SMMNRA, and are referred to as the administering agencies in this document.

When the recreation area was established in 1978, the state of California was the largest public landowner, with over 28,000 acres of land in four major parks. Federal land acquisition began in 1980 with an authorization of $155 million.

The area's first *General Management Plan* (GMP) was completed in 1982. In the last two years these agencies have joined together to assess the 1982 GMP and review the mission and purpose of the recreation area. While many of the issues and goals for the SMMNRA remain the same, the magnitude of use has changed dramatically and environmental impacts must be examined.

The three agencies have drafted a new general management plan and environmental impact statement document that offers five alternative approaches to manage the recreation area throughout the next 15 to 20 years. The alternatives could not have been developed without a comprehensive scoping and public involvement process. Each alternative has been examined for its potential impact on the environment, and the environmental consequences are reviewed in the environmental consequences and mitigation measures chapter.

The five suggested management alternatives include the no action alternative, the preferred alternative, the preservation alternative, the education alternative and the recreation alternative. The preferred alternative combines features of each. The development of these alternatives was based on public response to newsletters, public meetings and suggestions from the staff of the three administering agencies. Please see Table 8, Summary of Alternatives, at the end of the Alternatives chapter for alternative comparisons.

Each alternative presents conceptual visions for the recreation area in several levels of management areas: low intensity areas, moderate intensity areas, and high intensity areas. Within each alternative the management areas of community landscapes and scenic corridors are also addressed. The five management areas outline the existing and desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that should be achieved and maintained over time in specific areas.

The development of specific facilities is also discussed at a conceptual level. It is not known at this time whether improvements such as modifications to historic structures or other buildings, site plans for new facilities, location and layout of parking improvements, etc, would occur. For that reason, the analysis of the environmental consequences for each of the five alternatives must be quite general. Many of the action items, such as facility development presented in the general management plan, would require *additional* environmental analysis, in the form of environmental assessments or environmental impact statements, prior to implementation. Many items would also require additional compliance with federal biological and cultural resources laws and regulations.

Due to the general nature of the analysis presented herein, the types of environmental impacts for each of the five alternatives is fairly similar, as shown on Table 9, Summary of Environmental Consequences, at the end of the Alternatives chapter. Impacts result from 1) facility development, 2) proportion of types of management areas, 3) visitor use, and 4) park maintenance. These activities are included within each alternative. The difference between the alternatives lies with the number of facility developments and intensity and location of visitor use related to sensitive resources and required level of park maintenance activities. Therefore, the impacts and mitigation measures are similar, but the frequency and intensity of the impacts varies with each alternative.

Impacts on air quality, growth, population, housing, and employment are not expected with any of the alternatives and no mitigation measures would be required. Varying levels of impacts on soil erosion, water quality, biological, paleontological and cultural resources, and public services, utilities, and energy would occur with all alternatives. Implementation of the mitigation measures and further analysis of development proposals when sufficient detail is available would reduce impacts to less than significant levels. While the GMP/EIS designates management areas that differ from land uses designated for areas within the park in local general plans and coastal programs, the GMP/EIS has no

OVERVIEW OF WHY SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA IS EXCEPTIONAL

A NUMBER OF FACTORS set Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) apart. For one, it is the nation's largest urban recreation area. Comprising more than 150,000 acres, it is over twice the size of the second largest national recreation area, Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Santa Monica Mountains is distinguished from many other national parks/recreation areas in that it is a single expanse of land rather than a series of pocket parks. This is important because large blocks of land sustain the habitat or living space required by native wild plants and animals. The area is also the National Park Service's best mainland example of the Mediterranean Biome (land type), one of the smallest biomes found on the face of the earth, with only 18 percent left undisturbed. An endangered collection of plants and animals is found here.

Another distinguishing factor is that the city of Los Angeles is possibly the only city in the world divided by a mountain range or national recreation area and one of a few cities that has a national recreation area so readily accessible to so many people – 15.6 million.

The significance of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area has been frequently overlooked or misunderstood but that *needs to change*. The purpose of this general management plan is to plot a course into the future; one that ensures the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is preserved for all people, for all time.

authority over local land use decisions. Further, GMP/EIS designations would generally result in a beneficial impact on land use by reducing the intensity of use from commercial, industrial, residential and other uses to open space and visitor -serving facilities.

The no action alternative would result in the continuation of existing conditions. The education alternative is more intense than the no action alternative, but would focus on educational facilities and management activities. The recreational alternative would increase high intensity use areas and intensify visitor use and park maintenance activities.

Under the preservation alternative the priority is the preservation of natural and cultural resources rather than visitor use. This combination would result in the highest level

of environmental protection within the SMMNRA of any of the alternatives. However, the mission statement of the SMMNRA is not only to preserve natural and cultural resources, but also to "offer compatible recreation and education programs accessible to a diverse public." The preservation alternative does not fully meet the goals and objectives of the SMMNRA.

The preferred alternative is an environmentally superior alternative that also best meets the goals and objectives of the SMMNRA. It would designate 80 percent of the total acreage for preservation. Fifteen percent would be designated as moderate intensity use areas and 5 percent would be designated as high intensity use areas. However, the highest number of facilities would be developed within the high intensity use areas.

Purpose and Need

Fifteen years of extraordinary population growth, a greater knowledge of the area's resources, and evolving land use patterns have created a need for a new general management plan to protect the resources of the SMMNRA.

▲ *View of Malibu Canyon Road (NPS photo).*

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE GMP/EIS

The purpose of this general management plan (GMP) is to provide an updated framework for the collective management of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). Three park agencies serve as the recreation area's principal administrators: the National Park Service (NPS), California State Parks (CSP), and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC). Accompanying the plan is an environmental impact statement (EIS) to assess its potential environmental consequences, as required by law.

The administration of the SMMNRA is an experiment in cooperative park management. In 1978, Congress directed the National Park Service to serve as the lead coordinating agency for the cooperative administration of this complex national recreation area. This cooperative effort was formalized in a 2000 Agreement, signed by the National Park Service, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

Passage of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 directed the National Park Service to prepare and revise general management plans for the preservation and use of each unit of the national park system. The act stipulated that a plan should be prepared every 15 to 20 years. The last general management plan for the SMMNRA was released in 1982. Fifteen years of additional population growth, a greater knowledge of the area's resources, and evolving land use patterns have created a need for a new general management plan to protect the resources of the SMMNRA while addressing new obstacles and opportunities. The difficulty of managing the recreation area's special resources within an urban setting, especially considering the diversity of its sites and uses, magnifies the need for a new vision for the future. It is crucial to anticipate more visitations by the region's disproportionately large and diverse population, and to consider different types of recreational uses.

Ridgeline development in the Santa Monica Mountains (NPS photo).

This GMP/EIS, therefore, embodies a commitment to the people of Los Angeles and the Nation that a coordinated system of management would be redefined and updated to continue the preservation and promotion of the unique variety of land uses in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. This document fulfills Congressional intent for SMMNRA that:

> *"The Secretary of the Interior shall manage the recreation area in a manner which will preserve and enhance its scenic, natural and historic setting and its public health value as an air shed for the Southern California metropolitan area while providing for the recreational and educational needs of the visiting public."*

This document proposes five alternative plans that would achieve these actions. Following the required federal oversight, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, and public participation processes to determine the appropriate actions, one alternative plan is ultimately selected for further development and implementation.

All reasonable efforts are made within this proposal to make facilities, programs and services of the SMMNRA accessible to and usable by all people, including those with disabilities. To achieve this, the National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy would continue to develop strategies to ensure the continued preservation and enhancement

of the recreation area's scenic, natural and historic setting. The strategies would ensure that all new and rehabilitated buildings, facilities and programs, including those offered by concessionaires and interpreters, would be designed and implemented in conformance with applicable rules, regulations and standards.

Planning Process

Planning provides an opportunity to create a new vision and to define a park's role in relation to its national, historic and communal settings. The planning process is designed to provide decision-makers with adequate information about resources, impacts and costs. Analyzing the SMMNRA in relation to its surrounding natural, historic, and communal setting, as well as future challenges, helps park managers and staff understand how the park could interrelate with neighbors and others in systems that are ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. Decisions made within this planning context are more likely to be successful over time and promote more efficient use of public funds.

The planning process begins by defining the mission statement and purpose of the park, including which goals would fulfill that mission, and descriptions of resource conditions, visitor uses and management actions to best achieve those goals. After goals are established, the treatment and use of park resources is considered, based on scientific, technical and scholarly analyses that employ current scientific research as well as applied and accepted professional practices in park management. The planning analysis is tiered, focusing first on the park as a whole (on a global, national and regional context), environmental impacts to the park, and then on site-specific details. Management alternatives are generated based on the goals and analyses. The alternatives are then scrutinized with respect to their consistency with the park purpose and mission, the impact on park resources, the quality of the visitor experience, the short and long term costs, and environmental consequences that extend beyond park boundaries. The planning process for SMMNRA is illustrated on Figure 1.

A "core" planning team was assembled in the spring of 1997. It was comprised of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and chief of resource planning from the National Park Service, the district superintendent from the Angeles District of the California State Parks, the chief of their Southern Service Center, and the executive director and chief of planning of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. This group met separately and together with the staffs of their agencies to gather input from those who work in the SMMNRA on a daily basis. The "core" team again met in August of 1997 and April 1998 with representatives from over 70 state, federal and local agencies and municipalities for ideas on the future of the SMMNRA.

Throughout the planning process, the SMMNRA has requested input from the public at critical stages. Public participation in planning ensures that the SMMNRA fully understands and considers the public's interests in the park as part of their national heritage, cultural traditions, and community surroundings. The GMP/EIS effort began in 1997 when the planning team met to familiarize team members from outside the park with the resources, discuss issues and the scope of the plan, and create the SMMNRA mission statement. In August 1997, a meeting was held with more than 70 public agencies associated with land management within the SMMNRA boundary, to discuss the issues and future of the park. In early September 1997, the public was

formally notified of the planning effort and introduced to the planning process through publication of *Newsletter One*. Subsequent newsletters kept the public informed of progress. Two additional newsletters and two series of five public meetings each were conducted in preparation of this plan. The public participation process is detailed later in the "Consultation and Coordination with Others" section of this document.

Relationship to Other Planning Documents

The general management plan seeks to define *why* a park was established and what resource conditions and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time to conserve that original purpose. The plan considers various approaches to park use, management and development, some of which may represent competing interests for the same resource base. Ultimately, the GMP/EIS serves to define a series of *desired outcomes or conditions*. The plan covers a broad area, a wide range of programs and concerns, addresses an array of resources, and must, therefore, function at a general level.

The more specific actions required to attain the goals and outcomes defined in the GMP/EIS are accomplished through *implementation plans*. These plans apply to specific program areas, projects or operational and development strategies for specific areas of the park. Because planning is an ongoing and continuous process, the GMP/EIS must be viewed as a dynamic document. A number of plans already completed would remain in effect, and this GMP/EIS reflects those still deemed to be useful. Future implementation plans would use the goals and conditions defined in this GMP/EIS as their starting point. Implementation plans for actions with potential to affect the environment would require formal analysis of alternatives in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and related legislation, including the National Historic Preservation Act.

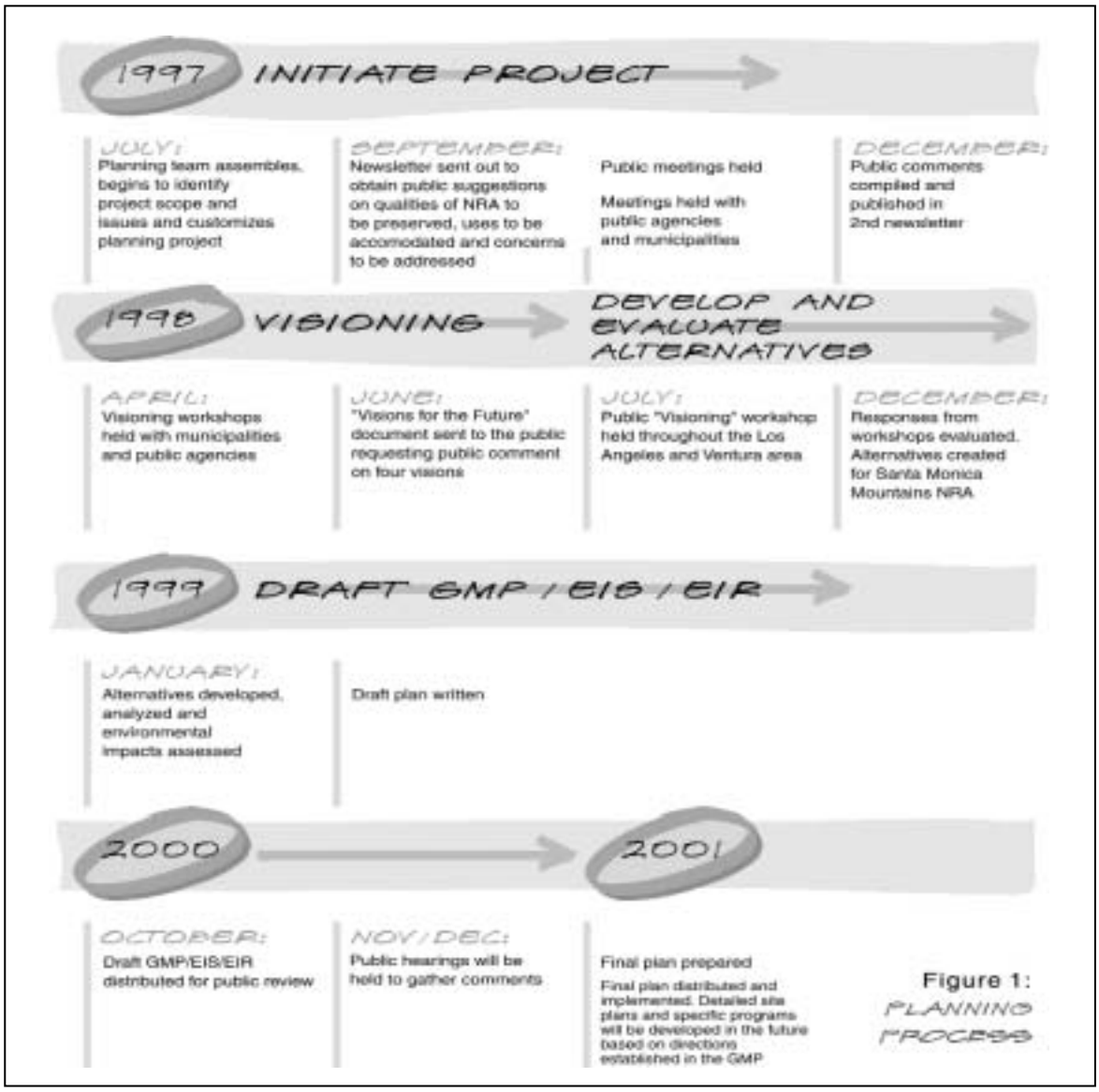
Other Planning Documents Still Current

Table 3 contains a list of specific plans developed by NPS to date and can be found in the Appendix. Plans determined to still be current are indicated in that table. Among the implementation plans current and particularly useful in the development of this GMP/EIS are: SMMNRA *Land Protection Plan* (NPS), *Resource Management Plan* (NPS), *Water Resources Management Plan* (NPS), *Business Plan* (NPS), *Development Concept Plans* (NPS), *Museum Management Plan* (NPS), and California State Parks *General Plans*.

Implementation of the GMP/EIS

While the SMMNRA general management plan and accompanying environmental impact statement represent the ultimate vision of the National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the actions called for in this joint plan would be accomplished over time. Budget restrictions, requirements for additional data, legal compliance and/or competing SMMNRA priorities prevent immediate implementation of many actions. The GMP/EIS is not an implementation plan but a framework for management and implementation plans. Major or costly actions could be implemented 10 or more years following the finalization of the document.

In the implementation of this GMP/EIS, the NPS, CSP and SMMC have limited authority over privately held lands, but would attempt to guide the decisions of other public agencies toward consistency with the joint



SMMNRA Planning Process.

plan, whenever possible. Implementation of the SMMNRA GMP/EIS is outlined below.

- **NPS-Owned Lands**

  The NPS would implement actions set forth in the GMP/EIS on NPS-owned lands, as funding becomes available for improvements and land acquisition.

  Improvements to specific facilities on NPS-owned lands, and/or acquisition of additional lands, would be completed according to specific implementation plans. Over time, some of these plans may be revised. A number of specific plans already exist. They would be revised for consistency with the GMP/EIS as necessary. When possible, future implementation plans would be jointly developed to reflect the cooperative interests and management of the SMMNRA. A trail management plan for the park

agencies of the Santa Monica Mountains would be among the first plans developed on this broader scale of resource and public interest.

- **California State Parks**

The CSP intends to utilize the GMP/EIS in relation to its own general planning process in the following ways:

The joint GMP/EIS would be used, in effect, as an advisory document. It would not replace state park general plans (existing and future plans, as well as associated amendments). Individual CSP general plans would continue to be viable and primary vehicles for the long-range planning of individual units in the Santa Monica Mountains, as specified in the Public Resources Code. The CSP would keep a general consistency between the GMP/EIS and its general plans. The goals and concepts set forth in the GMP/EIS would be used to plan and manage areas on behalf of the existing eight state park units included in the SMMNRA, as well as any future units in this area.

Table 4 in the Appendix contains a list of planning efforts in which CSP is engaged.

- **Opportunities for Interagency Cooperative Relationships**

The enabling legislation for the SMMNRA envisioned a cooperative effort between the state, local governments, and the NPS to preserve the "significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural, archeological and public health benefits provided by the Santa Monica Mountains and the adjacent coastline." Approximately 70 governmental agencies have some type of jurisdiction within the SMMNRA boundary. Cooperative relationships in the Santa Monica Mountains are both beneficial and a simple necessity. No single agency or governmental body currently or ever would, control the land base. Individually, the lands owned and managed by the separate agencies are too small, too interdependent and too vulnerable to sustain their biological integrity and absorb the impacts of natural processes such as fires and landslides or unnatural processes such as development. But as inter-linked resources, each supports the existence of others and provides for a natural system that can protect rare species and maintain an uninterrupted rugged landscape with continuous and diverse recreational opportunities to challenge the most experienced park visitor. The possibilities for cooperation are many and, clearly, available to accomplish every goal contained within the GMP/EIS. The administering agencies of the SMMNRA can provide input to the development of these plans by providing comments during public review periods and participating on task forces and environmental review committees. Please refer to Table 2, General Agreements with Other Agencies in the Appendix.

Relationships among SMMNRA-associated agencies are positive with frequent opportunities for cooperation. These are not limited to the NPS, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Los Angeles County Beaches and Harbors, for example, probably serves more recreation area visitors on coastal beaches than do the other SMMNRA agencies combined. Mugu Lagoon, administered by the U.S. Navy, supports one of the recreation area's most sensitive and endangered biological resources.

To the extent possible, the goals, policies and special land designations of the cooperating agencies are reflected in this GMP/EIS. One of the document's principal purposes is to provide a common framework whereby the mission and program objectives of each agency can be promoted for greater efficiency, implementation and more enduring results, to the benefit of humans and park resources alike. The principal means

by which the GMP/EIS can best be implemented is through detailed site and program plans, as well as annual work plans mutually developed by the park agencies. As the resources are best managed and preserved by a seamless expanse of parklands, so the public is best served by a seamless recreational experience that avoids unnecessary, confusing and wasteful duplication of government services.

The Park

No other urban national park features such a diversity of natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources within such a densely populated area.

▲ *Few national parks feature such a diverse assemblage of natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources within easy access of more than 17 million people (NPS photo).*

THE PARK

The Congress of the United States, finding that "…there are significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural, archeological, and public health benefits provided by the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent coastline area," established the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in 1978. It did so to "…preserve its scenic, natural, and historic setting and its public health value as an air shed for the Southern California metropolitan area while providing for the recreational and educational need of the visiting public." A core tenet of the 1978 legislation is partnership among federal and state park agencies, as well as local governments and private landowners.

Regional Location and Boundaries

The cooperative framework among agencies also means that SMMNRA has rather complex boundaries compared to other national park units. The legislated boundary of this park unit generally covers the Santa Monica Mountain region in southern California (see Figure 2) It totals 150,050 acres, and currently encompasses 69,099 acres of protected parkland. Ninety percent of the total area within the SMMNRA boundaries is not developed.

The recreation area extends from the Hollywood Bowl on the east, 46 miles west to Point Mugu, and averages seven miles in width (see Figure 3). To the north, the recreation area is bordered by Simi Valley, the San Fernando Valley, and many communities that have developed along Highway 101. These include Calabasas, Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village and Agoura Hills. The Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) crosses the recreation area to the south and includes Topanga, Malibu and Pacific Palisades. In the east the recreation area begins just north of Hollywood with small, undeveloped canyons. A little farther west, in Topanga State Park, the mountains reach a width of eight miles across, most of which is within the city limits of Los Angeles. The further west one travels the wilder and less developed the mountains become, ending at Point Mugu State Park, which encompasses the recreation area's only designated wilderness.

The Santa Monica Mountain Zone (SMMZ), comprising an additional 75,000 acres, was also established by the 1978 legislation. It extends beyond the boundaries of the national recreation area and includes the entire Santa Monica Mountain range. Local and state agencies are responsible for land use regulations within this zone, but the National Park Service retains, by law, reviewing authority on projects involving federal funds, permits, or licenses that may affect the recreation area. This authority was provided by Congress to reduce downstream impacts on recreation area resources when possible. The SMMZ incorporates watersheds and canyon slopes associated with, but not formally included in the SMMNRA, as well as the easternmost extension of the Santa Monica Mountains from the Hollywood freeway to include Griffith Park.

Landownership

The Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Act (enacted in 1978) mandated that a comprehensive plan be created to lay the framework for what the recreation area should be in terms of size and character. Then as now, the state of California was the largest public landowner, with more than 28,000 acres of land in four major state parks. Federal land acquisition began in 1980, with an authorization of $155 million. At that time the National Park Service targeted approximately 70,000 acres for future acquisition. When completed, about 100,000 of the SMMNRA's 150,000 acres would be parkland.

Table 1

LANDOWNERSHIP WITHIN SMMNRA BOUNDARY

Land Owner (Geographic Area)	Total Acreages *as of 2002*
Other Private Land	72,638
State Dept. of Parks & Recreation	34,909
National Park Service	22,093
Other Los Angeles County Land (non-parkland)	3,258
Mountain Resources Conservation Authority	5,729
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Land	2,922
University of CA Reserve	328
Other City of Los Angeles Land (non-parkland)	2,021
Miscellaneous Public Land	265
COSCA Open Space	0
Other Federal Land	936
Mountain Restoration Trust	1,491
Los Angeles County Parkland	328
City of Calabasas Parkland	245
City of Los Angeles Land	447
City of Thousand Oaks Parkland	36
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District	1,198

Figure 2:
REGION

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
CALIFORNIA

INCLUDES UNITS OF NPS, CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS,
AND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Regional location of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA).

Currently, some 63,000 acres of open space lands are held by government and conservation agencies within the SMMNRA. The largest amount of acreage remains in private ownership. Landownership statistics within the SMMNRA boundary have been listed on Table 1.

Land Protection Plan

The 1998 *Land Protection Plan* (LPP) is among the most critical to the formulation of this GMP/EIS. The LPP identifies and spatially locates significant natural, cultural and recreational resource parcels. The recreation area uses GIS, i.e., geographic information system software, to organize and analyze natural, cultural and recreational conservation criteria established by scientists and park managers throughout southern California. The GIS software groups the criteria and assigns a relative "score" to each parcel – in essence, a ranking of its parkland resource value. The specific resource information for each parcel can be listed to support its relative ranking for parkland acquisition. The LPP's information provides supportive "resource reasoning" for efforts to acquire particular properties.

Because knowledge of the Santa Monica Mountains is ever increasing, the GIS system

is intentionally dynamic, ever expanding the resource reasoning in land protection. When this general management plan is finally adopted, it would be reflected in the database used in the land protection process.

All immediate adjustments to the recreation area boundary contained within this GMP/EIS are predicated on the assumption of donation, land transfer or purchase by a non-federal entity. Recommendations for additional boundary studies do not make this assumption, and the impact of additional acquisition costs would be one of the factors considered in any future study.

The NPS and its partners continue to pursue parkland acquisition within the SMMNRA boundaries. This GMP/EIS presents a broad-brush approach concerning which areas in the mountains should be considered low, moderate or high intensity use areas. The SMMNRA *Land Protection Plan* provides specific parcel-based resource information to substantiate acquisition efforts in the GMP/EIS's use zones. The LPP provides a better understanding of resource and recreation values at risk, and enables the NPS to assess alternative approaches to resource protection, such as conservation easements, land exchanges and habitat conservation plans.

Description of the Park

The planning process for this GMP/EIS has focused on understanding and preserving the human relationships with the recreation area's physical, natural and cultural resources. The following resource descriptions might provide an idea of the human values that would be at stake if a sustainable plan were not in place.

Physical Resources

The mountains and beaches of the recreation area form a dramatic contrast to the urban sprawl of the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles Basin. The east-west trending mountain range is geologically complex and characterized by steep, rugged mountain slopes and canyons. Elevations range from sea level to more than 3,000 feet. The Santa Monica Mountains are adjacent to 46 miles of scenic California coastline with sandy beaches and rocky tide pools and lagoons. Long, wide, white beaches stretch along much of the coast, occasionally giving way to high bluffs and rocky outcrops jutting seaward. At 1,400 acres, Mugu Lagoon is the largest coastal wetland outside the San Francisco Bay area. Malibu Lagoon and Mugu Lagoon are important stopovers for neo-tropical and other birds migrating along the Pacific flyway.

The diversity of the coastal resources along Santa Monica Bay is magnificent. The Saddlerock pictograph site is deemed eligible as a national historic landmark and the Paramount Movie Ranch is an historically significant cultural landscape. Will Rogers Ranch, the Adamson House and Los Encinos are important visitor attractions.

Natural Resources

There is tremendous ecological diversity within the recreation area. Grassy hills, oak woodlands, valley oak savannas, rocky outcrops, and riparian woodlands give way to chaparral-covered slopes, coastal marshes, and rural residential and agricultural areas. Numerous mammals are found in the mountains, including bobcats, coyotes, mountain lions, mule deer, golden eagle and badgers. Nearly 400 species of birds and 35 species of reptiles and amphibians are known to occur in the SMMNRA. More than 20 federal or state listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species and four additional state-listed threatened and endangered species find habitat within the Santa Monica Mountains. In addition, 46 federal and state animal and 11 plant "species of concern" also occur. These plant, animal,

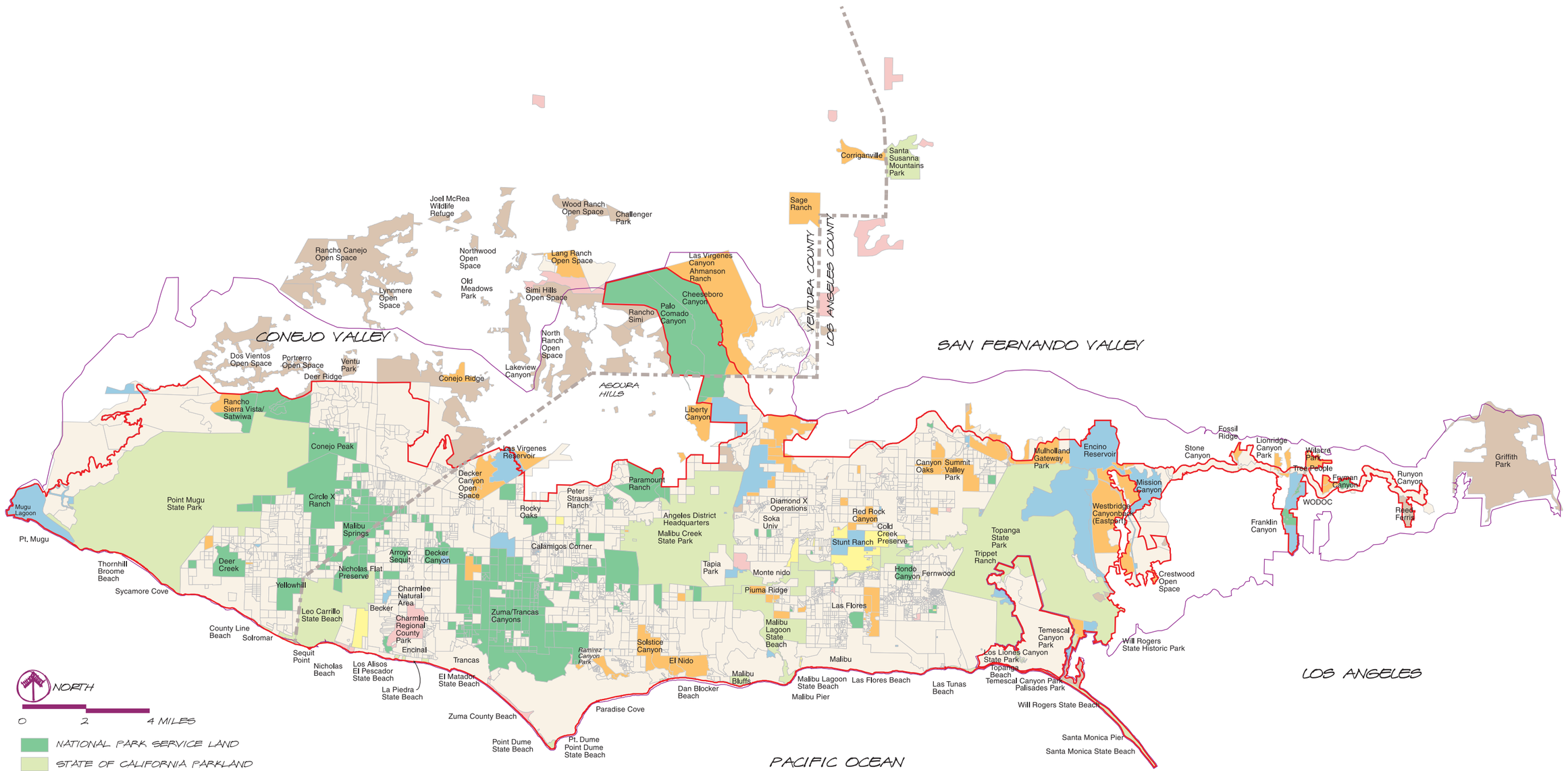

Figure 3:

CURRENT PARK LANDOWNERSHIP

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA CALIFORNIA

INCLUDES UNITS OF NPS, CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS, AND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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The Santa Monica Mountains are adjacent to 46 miles of scenic California coastline with sandy beaches and rocky tide pools and lagoons.

and habitat types are a part of a diverse and increasingly rare, complex natural ecosystem that has adapted to the southern California Mediterranean-type climate of wet winters and warm, dry summers.

The global significance of the Mediterranean-type ecosystem is becoming increasingly recognized. A recent mapping of global environments shows this biome among the smallest and most rare on earth, and each has experienced intense human occupation. As a result, only 18 percent of this ecosystem remain undisturbed in the world (Hannah et al 1995).

Fire has been an especially important factor shaping ecosystems of the Santa Monica Mountains. Fire contributes to the control of nutrient cycles and energy pathways. Through much of the past, fire has been a natural process, contributing to the diversity, productivity and regeneration of ecosystems. The recreation area's vegetation and wildlife have evolved over millions of years in partial response to naturally occurring fires. These fires, in combination with aboriginal burning during the last 12,000 years, shaped the landscape.

However, the current proximity and accessibility of the mountains to millions of people have heavily influenced current fire regimes. All of the major fires since 1925 have been human caused – either by arson or accidental events (e.g. downed power poles, vehicle emissions, cigarettes tossed out the car window, etc.). In the southern California brushlands, numbers of fires have increased and fire rotation intervals have decreased over the 20th century as population densities have increased (Keeley, et.al. 1999). Even accounting for burning by Native American

Indians, it was likely that pre-historic fire frequency was lower and return intervals significantly longer. Fire has long been used as a tool to intentionally convert shrub lands to clear farmland and produce grasslands more suitable to grazing livestock. Now, however, high fire frequencies are creating an undesired effect. The conversion of native chaparral communities to non-native grasslands has altered the native vegetation structure, which facilitates further invasion of non-native species – particularly exotic species.

The fire season begins in early May, when the non-native annual grasslands dry up. The season continues throughout the summer, and is comprised of high temperatures and the long summer drought. The Santa Ana winds, which are prevalent in late summer, also contribute to the high fire hazard.

View of Sycamore Canyon (NPS photo).

Cultural Resources

Few national parks feature such a diverse assemblage of natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources within easy access of more than 17 million people. The population surrounding the SMMNRA has developed a California-type of lifestyle and culture that has influenced the world with innovative contemporary architecture, literature, music and recreational pursuits. The California film industry has added to the region's legacy by capturing the American culture on film and exporting historical images to the world with many Santa Monica Mountain locations in the background.

Aside from the contemporary California culture, the Santa Monica Mountains surround nationally significant ethnographic, archeological, historic and scenic sites. More than 1,000 known archeological sites are located within the SMMNRA boundary, one of the highest densities of archeological resources found in any mountain range in the world. The 26 known Chumash pictograph sites, sacred to traditional Native American Indians, are among the most spectacular found anywhere. Nearly every major prehistoric and historic theme associated with human interaction and development of the western United States is represented here. Three historice structures in the SMMNRA are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. More than 73 archeological/historic sites in the Santa Monica Mountains are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Among these are recreation area sites such as Paramount Ranch, which continues to be used by the filming industry.

An estimated 40 percent of all the land throughout the Santa Monica Mountains has been surveyed for archeological sites, and about 70 percent of National Park Service lands in the SMMNRA have been surveyed for archeological sites. California State Parks conducts similar studies and inventories on state park properties in the course of preparing or updating general plans, interpretive or educational plans, resource management plans, and comprehensive master plans.

In 2001, the recreation area will begin an Historic Resource Study of NPS lands. This is a three-year project that will identify and nominate to the National Register those structures, sites and cultural landscapes that appear to meet National Register criteria for

listing at the local, state or national level of significance.

Rich and diverse cultural resources have contributed to the "livability" of the Santa Monica Mountains. Nearly every major prehistoric and historic theme associated with human interaction and development of the western United States is represented within the SMMNRA boundary – from early hunters and gatherers, to Native American Indian cultures, the Spanish mission and rancho periods, and the American homestead era. Over time, these Native American cultures developed large villages in the Santa Monica Mountains, extensive maritime and inland trade routes, and monetary systems. Their legacy is recorded through sacred pictographs, records of their extensive astronomical knowledge, and exquisite basketry, stone and woodcarvings. The Santa Monica Mountains were, and still remain, home to two of the largest Native American Indian groups in California, the Chumash and the Gabrielino/Tongva.

Petroglyph discovered in the Santa Monica Mountains (NPS photo).

Beginning in the late 1880s, the mountains were recognized as a resort mecca by recreation and sports clubs as well as non-profit organizations and churches. Many groups have built retreats here. Large estates began to appear in the 1920s and continue to be built today.

The easy accessibility and varied topography of the Santa Monica Mountains was also key to the emergence of the movie industry in Los Angeles. From here, the movie industry created – and exported to the world – the Hollywood version of the American culture. The Paramount Ranch constitutes one of the best remaining cultural sites associated with the golden age of motion pictures. The motion picture production history spans silent movie making to modern television programming. As the motion picture industry brought fame to southern California, celebrated "stars" moved to Santa Monica,


THE CITY

Vol. XLVI

WORLD ON MOVE
AT LASKY RANCH

Paramount Shifting to New 2700-Acre Property

Ghost Towns of Filmdom to Rise Near Calabasas

Lease on North Hollywood Site Allowed to Expire

SUNDAY MORNING.

LASKY MOVING TO LARGER SITE

Ranch in North Hollywood to be Abandoned

Famous Sets Being Shifted to New Property

Modern Features Used at Calabasas Lot

The Angeles Times

Where Film History and Great Stars Were Made

The Santa Monica Mountains were, in the past and present, a backdrop for numerous movies and television productions (NPS archives).

Pacific Palisades, and Malibu, forming the nucleus of luxurious movie colonies.

Visitor Experience

Visitors to Los Angeles experience the natural beauty and cultural richness of the SMMNRA as a welcome natural and cultural alternative to the highly developed greater Los Angeles area. It would be the goal of this GMP/EIS to provide guidance for the SMMNRA to continue to provide these experiences.

Just outside the recreation area boundary, the communities surrounding the Santa Monica Mountains have led growth in the state for the last 15 to 20 years. Residential and commercial centers have filled the valley floors and foothills north of the mountains. The San Fernando Valley, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village and Thousand Oaks communities have developed new tract subdivisions, apartment complexes, large planned communities, and commercial centers. The desire to live in a rural setting, void of urban distractions and stresses, is a strong factor in the development within the recreation area boundary.

Zuma-Trancas Canyon (NPS photo).

Each year more than 33 million visitors enjoy the beaches and mountains within the SMMNRA. Visitors hike, bike or ride on hundreds of miles of mountain trails, or drive the scenic roads. Communities within and adjacent to the recreation area provide a wide variety of visitor and tourist services.

Implementing any one of the alternatives proposed in this GMP/EIS would allow visitors to continue to experience the variety of activities in the recreation area. Any of the plans would be designed to create a feeling of compassion for the treasures of California's past and to encourage appreciation for the remaining land so that it would continue to be protected and available for future enjoyment.

- **National Park Service**

  The National Park Service "oversees" the SMMNRA, but currently has direct responsibility for only about 15 percent of the land within the boundary. The NPS is a partner, sharing stewardship with the public, other agencies and private landowners. The National Park Service provides for the operation, maintenance, resource management, education, and resource and visitor protection on all NPS lands. The legislation establishing the 150,000-acre SMMNRA emphasizes cooperative relationships. Thus, NPS has a less direct, but very clear duty to support activities on non-NPS lands consistent with the purposes of the SMMNRA. Please refer to Figure 4 for the existing conditions and recreational opportunities of the park. National Park Service units include:

  - ***Zuma-Trancas Canyon*** – This wild coastal canyon is largely undisturbed by adjacent development and contains endangered species and rare perennial streams. The canyon contains critical core habitat and

abundant species diversity in large blocks of coastal sage scrub vegetation. Hiking trails are available. Bicycles are allowed on Zuma Ridge.

- ***Paramount Ranch*** – This historic movie ranch is used by filmmakers. The ranch features beautiful valley oak savannas and short hiking trails. This site is currently used for interpretation and observation of filmmaking. There are several trails at the ranch and it is used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education.
- ***Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa*** – This is a place of special significance to Native American Indians as it contains sites of a Chumash habitation and is the crossroad of two Native American Indian trails and trade routes. Beautiful views of Boney Mountain feature a pastoral ranch-like setting. The site is currently used for the Satwiwa Native American Cultural Center with interpretive programs and recreational trails. The site is a gateway to Point Mugu State Park and Boney Mountain Wilderness. There are several trails here and it is used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education.

Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa (NPS photo).

- ***Arroyo Sequit*** – This area contains rolling grassland mixed with chaparral with a picnic area and a wood frame ranch house serving as a ranger residence. The site is considered a significant example of the homesteading era. The area is excellent for viewing the night sky as it is tucked away from the lights of Los Angeles.

Culturally significant Paramount Ranch (NPS archives).

- ***Circle X Ranch*** – One of the few individual and group camping sites, this site is the gateway to the most remote parts of the Santa Monica Mountains and has the highest peak in the range. It is a secluded mountainous area with impressive rocky outcrops and a variety of scenic trails. This site was a Boy Scout camp from the 1950s to the 1960s. The ranch has areas for picnicking and a ranch house for group use.
- ***Rocky Oaks*** – One of the more accessible sites in the mountains, Rocky Oaks contains scenic oak woodlands with a pond and wetlands. It is adjacent to the Saddle Rock pictograph site. This unit has nature trails, an amphitheater and picnic area.
- ***Castro Crest*** – Part of the Backbone Trail corridor, this prominent ridgeline has stunning rock formations and views of the ocean and the mountains.

Upper Cheeseboro Canyon (NPS photo).

- ***Cheeseboro Canyon and Simi Hills*** – Rolling hills with valley oak savannas and unique rock lands provide nesting habitat for a tremendous diversity of raptors here. Lush riparian areas comprise the character of this site. The area was a significant cattle ranching district used from the 1780s to the 1900s. Significant Chumash and Gabrielino/Tongva religious sites occur very close to the NPS boundary. Views from Simi Peak dramatically contrast the surrounding valleys and natural landscapes with the man-made environment. This area receives a high level of use on the trails by mountain bikers, horseback riders and hikers.

Peter Strauss Ranch (NPS photo).

- ***Solstice Canyon*** – Solstice Canyon is a lush, narrow canyon that offers a perennial stream with an extensive riparian community. The site provides conditions suitable for the reinroduction of endangered steelhead trout. The Canyon also features several notable archeological sites and a stone cabin, built by Mathew Keller, which represents homesteading in the coastal Santa Monica Mountains. There are several trails in the canyon that connect the coastal and mountain habitats. The Canyon is used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education.
- ***Peter Strauss Ranch*** – A small ranch showcases the original stone house (1927) and outbuildings built by the original owner, Harry Miller, inventor of the carburetor. The Smithsonian refers to him as the greatest automotive genius of the century. This site is used for festivals, picnicking, concerts, and special events.

◗ **California State Parks**

Of the 150,000 acres included within the boundary of the national recreation area, the California State Parks manages an estimated 33,271 acres.

The CSP administers its lands according to the classifications and subclassification defined in the State of California Public Resources Code. Classifications include wilderness, reserves, parks, recreation areas, historical units and natural reserves.

Department headquarters is located in Malibu Creek State Park. State park units are listed below and illustrated in Figure 4:

Point Mugu State Park (NPS photo).

- ***Point Mugu State Park*** – This area makes up one of the largest contiguous undisturbed areas in the SMMNRA. It features a large wilderness preserve and several perennial streams. There are significant diverse plant communities across the area. The mountain and coastal interface provides a unique recreational experience. The Point Mugu area was also an important trade route for Native Americans with numerous associated archeological sites. There are beach and canyon campgrounds, a group campground area, picnic facilities, and hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails.
- ***Leo Carrillo State Park*** – There is a variety of habitat from significant tide pools to upland vegetative habitats here, with one of the best areas for viewing wildflowers in this unit in the western part of the recreation area. It is also a monarch butterfly migration area. There are beach and canyon campground facilities (including group camping). A large archeological village site is located near the beach.
- ***Point Dume State Beach*** – This promontory defines the northern end of Santa Monica Bay and provides spectacular views of the entire coastal corridor of the recreation area. The unit is divided into a popular recreational beach area (on the up coast end) operated by the County of Los Angeles, and a natural preserve that includes the promontory, natural upland habitat, tide pools, a remote beach and a seal haul out area.
- ***Malibu Creek State Park*** – This area has a variety of habitat, perennial creeks, pools, lakes, valley oaks, lush riparian areas and views of rugged mountains. Malibu Canyon is a prominent feature of the area. At its deepest, it is approximately 1900 feet deep. Malibu Creek State Park has been used for many movie and television locations. It was a significant interface site between the two Native American Indian groups, the Chumash and the Gabrielino/Tonga. There is a Chumash village site here as well as several historic structures. Campground and picnic facilities are scattered throughout the park, as are numerous hiking trails. This site also serves as headquarters for the Angeles District of the California State Parks.
- ***Malibu Lagoon State Beach*** – is one of the two significant lagoons in southern California. It is a habitat for Steelhead trout and tidewater Goby and is a major bird flyway. The beach area operated by the County of Los Angeles is considered

Point Mugu State Park (NPS photo).

superior for surfing. The Adamson House features the best surviving example of the Malibu Tile Industry. There was a Chumash village site here that was a regional capital before the Spanish settled here.

- ***Topanga State Park*** – This area is the largest contiguous block of native habitat in the eastern part of the Santa Monica Mountains and has some of the most significant marine and plant fossils in the Santa Monica Mountains. There are hiking and horse trails, a small picnic area and a flat area for informal sports. The first archeological site recorded in Los Angeles County is here as well.
- ***Will Rogers State Historical Park*** – At the southern end of the Santa Monica Mountains, adjoining Topanga State Park is the ranch created by humorist Will Rogers. The 186.5 acre equestrian ranch, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, includes numerous historic structures and site features. Structures include the main ranch house, stables, hay barn, and other outbuildings. Historic site features include the polo field, riding area, roping corral, pastures, historic tree plantings, and an extensive system of rock walls and stone drainage channels. The unit provides a trailhead to Topanga State Park trails and to the Backbone Trail, as well as facilities for boarding, riding, and polo events.

◗ **Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy**

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was created in 1979 as the successor agency of the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission and to complement the zoning power of local governments and the acquisition of lands by the federal government within the Santa Monica

Mountains Zone. The SMMC relies on the *Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan* (1979), a plan that is compatible with the goals of the recreation area, to determine which land should be acquired. The SMMC also reviews the consistency of local government actions with the comprehensive plan as they determine their eligibility for NPS or SMMC managed grant programs.

The primary responsibility of the agency is to acquire land and turn it over to the appropriate land management agencies. The SMMC is not a park management agency, although it has acquired many key park and recreation parcels in the mountains, totaling 5,200 acres. The SMMC has also developed a series of scenic overlooks along Mulholland Scenic Corridor and has been very supportive of the purposes of the national recreation area. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is the land management arm of the SMMC created under a Joint Powers Agreement in cooperation with several local park agencies.

Headquarters for the SMMC is at the Ramirez Canyon Park in Malibu. Through the assistance of its joint powers authority, the MRCA operates the following SMMC lands within the national recreation area:

- ***Coldwater Canyon*** – Once the mountain patrol headquarters for the Los Angeles Fire Department, it is now an environmental education center with seven miles of nature trail and environmental displays.
- ***Corral Canyon*** – This is the largest undeveloped canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains. It represents a conjunction of coastal and mountain habitats and accesses part of the Pacific Coast trail network running east/west through the Santa Monica Mountains.
- ***Cross-Mountain Parks*** – Several pockets of open space within surrounding urban residential development in the eastern portion of the Santa Monica Mountains provide views and hiking trails. These natural oases contain riparian forests, oak woodlands and chaparral
- ***Franklin Canyon Ranch*** – Cooperatively administered by the NPS and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, this open space is a natural canyon in the heart of an urban area that features trails (including one fully accessible) and the William O. Douglas Outdoor Center. It is a site for filming with its picturesque springs, creek and lake. The ranch still contains portions of the water delivery system to Los Angeles from the Owens Valley Aqueduct designed by Mulholland, and is potentially eligible for the National Register.
- ***Fryman Canyon*** – A wayside overlook on Mulholland Drive provides spectacular views of Los Angeles, Hollywood, the San Fernando Valley, Santa Susanna Mountains and the west end of the San Gabriel Mountains. There is a mountain trail connecting to Coldwater Canyon and Wilacre Park, offering an opportunity to experience a chaparral wilderness hiking experience
- ***Mission Canyon*** – Part of the original Mulholland Scenic Corridor Park sites, it was formerly attached to the Nike missile site, and was a landfill for 20 years, serving the San Fernando Valley. The canyon is just west of the San Diego Freeway and south of Mulholland Drive.
- ***Red Rock Canyon*** – Large, beautiful eroded boulders of sandstone and conglomerate rock fill this canyon. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has converted a pre-existing Boy Scouts of America building into a wilderness training and education center.
- ***San Vincente Mountain Park*** – This 10.23-acre park was also the former site of a Nike missile tracking station in the 1950s

and 1960s. The park is one and a half miles west of Los Angeles County Sanitation District Mission Canyon Landfill. After many years of public abuse the park was restored to native vegetation and gravel paths, with the intent of utilizing the old radar tower as a hillside-viewing platform.

- ***Temescal Canyon Gateway Park*** – The main southern entrance and parking area for hikers headed into the steep backcountry of Topanga State Park is at this gateway park. The shaded canyon shelters the facilities and structures for the Presbyterian Conference Grounds, which, in the 1920s used the Canyon for their annual Chatauqua summer festivals.

Park Significance, Mission and Goals

Congress established the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in 1978 as a cooperative effort to preserve the scenic, natural and historic, as well as public health values of the Santa Monica Mountains. Those purposes serve as the basic guide for this planning effort. Planning direction is further refined by the orderly progression through four successive steps. First, consideration must be given to the SMMNRA's national significance. Then, a basic statement of mission based on significance and legislative purposes is established. This is followed by the identification of planning issues that challenge the success of the SMMNRA's mission. Finally a set of mission goals is established defining the necessary outcomes and conditions that the plan must take, to realize the basic purpose and mission of the park. The final plan, as well as the other alternatives considered during this planning process, must fulfill and/or be consistent with the SMMNRA's mission goals.

PARK SIGNIFICANCE

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is nationally significant because it protects for the American people the greatest expanse of mainland Mediterranean ecosystems in the National Park System. As such, it is among the world's rarest and most endangered ecosystems that occurs in only five locations throughout the world. A Mediterranean ecosystem is characterized by mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers, plus scrubby vegetation called "chaparral" in California. Santa Ana winds that gust down slopes and canyons drive up the fire danger in fall. This extraordinarily diverse ecosystem is home to 26 distinct natural communities, from freshwater aquatic habitats and two of the last salt marshes on the Pacific Coast, to oak woodlands, valley oak savannas, and chaparral. Situated within a one-hour commute to more than 17 million people (a population large enough to rank behind California, New York and Texas in size), the recreation area is a critical haven for more than 450 animal species, including mountain lions, bobcats and golden eagles. It is also home to more than 20 federal to state-listed threatened or endangered plants and animals and another 46 animals and 11

Petroglyph found within the park's boundaries (NPS photo).

The "San Francisco as the 49ers knew it" movie set at Paramount Ranch. The movie, Wells Fargo, *was produced by Paramount Pictures and directed by Frank Lloyd with Joel McCrea (NPS archives).*

plants that are federal or state species of concern - among the highest concentrations of such rare species in the United States. The significance of the Santa Monica Mountains is further established by the existence of more than 1000 archeological sites within the park's boundaries. These sites reflect human habitations in these mountains dating back at least 10,000 years. Three structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and more than 73 archeological/historical sites are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. In addition, Native American Indians have a long and deeply spiritual history of interaction with the Santa Monica Mountains, and many parts of the park are especially valued by them as places to seek spiritual renewal, conduct traditional ceremonies, and to gather plants for traditional purposes.

The park is also rich in historical themes, ranging from California's earliest exploration and settlement by Spain, to its subsequent administration by the Republic of Mexico, as well as the course of Los Angeles' urbanization, from citrus groves to tract homes by way of oil development, motion pictures and freeways. Paramount Ranch, as a case in point, is held by some historians to be the Nation's best remaining example of a film production facility from Hollywood's "Golden Era of Motion Pictures." Continued use of the Santa Monica Mountains for film production preserves a 75-year tradition that still holds the world's fascination.

PARK MISSION

Drawing upon the foregoing legislative purpose and significance, the staff of the National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy created a joint mission statement in 1997 to guide the general management plan and environmental impact statement through its evolution. Over the next year, as ideas and visions for the future were generated by the public and staff during meetings and public hearings, all were tested against this statement.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is to protect and enhance, on a sustainable basis, one of the world's last remaining examples of a Mediterranean ecosystem and to maintain the area's unique natural, cultural and scenic resources, unimpaired for future generations. The SMMNRA is to provide an inter-linking system of parklands and open spaces that offer compatible recreation and education opportunities that are accessible to a diverse public. This is accomplished by an innovative federal, state, local, and private partnership that enhances the region's quality of life and provides a model for other parks challenged by urbanization.

A bobcat emerges from a cross-highway tunnel connecting two habitats (NPS photo).

PLANNING ISSUES (MISSION CHALLENGES)

Since July 1997, public workshops were conducted, newsletters with comment forms were distributed, and agencies were interviewed with the intent of determining the issues relevant to the recreation area. The dimensions of many of these problems exceed the reach of this plan's solutions, such as traffic and population growth. Even so, the intent of this GMP/EIS is to formulate strategies that limit their impact on SMMNRA resources and the fulfillment of the park's mission.

The six categories below highlight the issues affecting the recreation area's future.

Resource Condition Issues

- The Los Angeles region continues to grow rapidly, placing immense pressure on the SMMNRA. Human construction and intrusion have resulted in the loss

New homes overlooking Lake Sherwood with Stoney Point in the background (photo by Ed Lawrence).

CIRCLE X RANCH
- camping
- hiking
- environmental study area
- picnicking
- group events

RANCH SIERRA VISTA
- Native American cultural center
- outdoor education
- interpretation
- camping
- hiking and equestrian access to Point Mugu State Park
- picnicking
- living history farm
- jogging & bicycle trail
- public equestrian use

ROCKY OAKS
- cultural interpretation
- outdoor education
- public equestrian use
- picnicking
- equestrian trailhead

CONEJO VALLEY

PARAMOUNT RANCH
- picnicking and open space activities
- movie industry interpretation
- festival and special events artisan displays open-air concerts film festival for local filmmakers fairs
- jogging trail
- public equestrian use

PETER STRAUSS RANCH
- trailhead parking
- hiking
- picnicking
- small festivals & special events

CASTRO CREST
- hiking
- mountain biking
- public equestrian use
- nature study

CHEESEBORO
- outdoor education
- equestrian staging
- trailhead parking
- picnicking
- natural history interpretation
- historic preservation
- mountain biking

VENTURA COUNTY
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

STUNT RANCH
- trailhead parking
- picnicking
- outdoor education

RED ROCK CANYON
- hiking
- picnicking
- group events

MISSION CANYON
- information
- transportation center
- outdoor education

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

WILDACRE PARK
- overlook
- trailhead parking

COLDWATER CANYON PARK
- overlook
- trailhead parking

FRYMAN CANYON
- overlook
- trailhead parking

RUNYON CANYON
- hiking
- picnicking
- trailhead parking

SAN VINCENTE MOUNTAIN PARK
- outdoor education
- view site
- picnicking

TAPIA STATE PARK
- picknicking
- hiking

NEWTON CANYON
- hiking
- information/ orientation

MALIBU OVERLOOK
- information / orientation

MUGU LAGOON
- view site
- estuary interpretation
- restoration

POINT MUGU STATE PARK
- camping
- hiking
- bicycling
- equestrian staging
- wildlife viewing

ARROYO SEGUIT
- picnicking
- astronomy
- hiking

LEO CARRILLO STATE PARK
- camping
- hiking
- nature hikes
- campfire program

EL SOL
- beach access

EL MATADOR STATE BEACH
- beach access

LA PIEDRA STATE BEACH
- beach access

CHARMLEE NATURAL AREA
- astronomy center

EL PESCADOR STATE BEACH
- beach access
- marine resource interpretation

ZUMA TRANCAS
- hiking
- equestrian staging
- information / orientation
- nature study

ZUMA LAGOON
- restoration
- walking
- picnicking

ENCINAL
- picnicking

SOLSTICE CANYON
- picnicking
- hiking
- information / orientation
- education/interpretation
- public equestrian use

MALIBU BLUFFS
- picnicking
- view site
- marine resource interpretation
- information/ orientation

MALIBU CREEK STATE PARK
- camping
- hiking
- wildlife viewing
- equestrian staging
- bicycling

MALIBU PIER
- pier fishing
- exhibits of local artists and craftsmen
- open-air market

ADAMSON HOUSE
- State Historic Landmark

MALIBU LAGOON STATE BEACH
- picnicking
- nature hiking
- wildlife viewing

COLD CREEK CANYON PRESERVE
- hiking
- equestrian staging

TOPANGA STATE PARK
- camping
- hiking
- wildlife viewing
- equestrian staging
- bicycling

LOS LIONES
- trailhead

TEMESCAL CANYON GATEWAY PARK
- outdoor deucation center
- hiking access to Topanga state park
- trailhead parking

FRANKLIN CANYON RANCH
- information / orientation
- picnicking
- nature center
- botanical garden
- hiking, biking

CROSS-MOUNTAIN PARKS
- outdoor education
- information / orientation
- introductory programs to resource-oriented activities such as: backpacking, orienteering, bird watching, nature, photography
- picnicking
- hiking, walking, bicycling
- demonstration gardens

LOS ANGELES

NORTH
0 1 2 MILES

- SMMNRA BOUNDARY
- SMMNC BOUNDARY
- SCENIC CORRIDOR
- URBAN LANDSCAPE
- LAND ADJACENT TO PARK BOUNDARIES TO BE ADDED
- SMNRA HEADQUARTERS
- PRESERVE AREAS
- NATIONAL PARK SERVICE LANDS
- OTHER PUBLIC PARKLANDS
- PRESERVES AND PRIVATE RECREATION SITES
- OTHER LAND WITHIN THE AUTHORIZED BOUNDARY
- ACTIVITY SITE EXISTING ON PUBLIC LAND
- BACKBONE TRAIL
- OTHER TRAILS
- TOMOL SEA KAYAK TRAIL

Figure 4:
EXISTING CONDITIONS & RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA CALIFORNIA

INCLUDES UNITS OF NPS, CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS, AND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service
DSC • April 2002 • 638 • 20070

HABITAT LOSS AND FRAGMENTATION

THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS are nearly isolated from other natural areas in southern California by the surrounding urban and agricultural lands. In addition, ongoing development throughout the mountains is subdividing the remaining natural landscape. Continued habitat loss and fragmentation threatens the long-term existence of many native species and is one of the greatest threats facing biodiversity protection. Larger mammals, such as mountain lions, bobcats, and badgers, are particularly at risk and may be vulnerable to extinction by chance demographic, environmental, and genetic events in fragmented areas. Conservation biologists recognize that protecting large core habitat areas is the most effective way to counter fragmentation effects. Further, maintaining or re-establishing connections between large areas would help prevent isolation of wildlife populations.

To address these concerns, the park has adopted a three-step program of research, monitoring, and management actions. The value of a core area, habitat linkage, or corridor is dependent on its use by wildlife. Thus, the first step in the program is research on habitat use and area requirements of selected target species, including the use of corridors and linkages by wildlife. Second, the park monitors the effects of human activity on wildlife, including effects of recreation, urban and residential development, habitat fragmentation, and traffic. Target plant and animal species – "vital signs" – are being identified for detecting potential changes over time. Finally, the knowledge gained from ongoing research and monitoring is used to identify, protect and restore a network of core habitat areas, linkages and corridors at a variety of spatial scales.

or degradation of resources, including threatened and endangered species habitat.

- Cultural resources are at risk as more people visit the recreation area, and development continues on each side of the boundary.
- Critical habitat, wildlife corridors, watersheds, archeological and historical sites on private lands are disappearing to development.
- Certain cultural landscapes have a unique character important to the human history of the Santa Monica Mountains. They may be diminished by incompatible future development.
- Many home sites, highly susceptible to fire, flood, land sliding and earthquakes, are being developed with little regard for environmental consequences, potential for

Hikers on one of many trails in the SMMNRA (NPS photo).

causing human misery, or consequent burden on taxpayers.

- Competition for remaining open lands diminishes park values, and ongoing development continues to escalate land prices.
- Private development of residences along ridgelines and the oceanfront intrude on the scenic vistas.

Land Use and Ownership Issues

- Implementation of an effective land management strategy is difficult because more than 65 government entities share jurisdiction of land within the park boundary.
- The public land managing partners are often unable to acquire additional lands due to limited funding and a lengthy acquisition process.

Visitor Experience Issues

- Conflicts among different recreational users, such as mountain bikers, horseback riders and hikers, detract from the quality of the SMMNRA experience.
- Population growth and increasing visitation require more facilities, parking areas, and established trails, and decrease opportunities for solitude in much of the recreation area.

Education and Interpretation Issues

- Current environmental education programs are too limited in availability to meet the needs and numbers of the diverse population of the Los Angeles area.

Access and Transportation Issues

- Mountains and beaches are inaccessible to many people in the Los Angeles area due to lack of public transportation, insufficient routing information about how to access recreation sites, and heavily congested roads during commuter periods and weekends.
- Many of the existing park facilities are not universally accessible.

Operations Issues

- Proximity and similarities in missions overlap among the public land managers in the SMMNRA, resulting in a risk of duplication of facilities and effort.

MISSION GOALS

The SMMNRA would strive to achieve the following goals regardless of the alternative selected in this planning process. These goals incorporate public comments about desired future conditions for the park. The Mission Goals also reflect the planning issues identified in the previous section, as well as the mission, law, core values and policies of the three principal park agencies joined in this planning effort.

Resource Condition Goals

- Protect and enhance species, habitat diversity and natural processes.

- Protect and restore native plant species and plant communities, such as coastal sage scrub, coastal live oak woodland, and valley oak savannas.
- Protect and restore estuaries and wetlands.
- Enact programs to combat and remove the encroachment of exotic flora and fauna into natural ecosystems where feasible.
- Manage fire throughout the recreation area to mimic natural fire regimes where feasible and reduce the threat of wildfires.
- Maintain or improve water quality and manage riparian communities, natural stream characteristics, estuaries and coastal waters for their significant ecological value.
- Implement collaborative scientific research and innovative resource management

ALIEN PLANT CONTROL

ALIEN PLANTS COMPRISE 27 percent of the Santa Monica Mountains flora, a figure higher than the overall average for California. The problem is exacerbated by urbanization and the increasing recreational use of the mountains, which contributes to disturbances, including fire. These disturbances facilitate the introduction and spread of alien plants. Many of these alien plants originate in the Mediterranean basin and northern Europe and have demonstrated superior competitive abilities in human-influenced environments. Alien plants present a profound threat to the integrity of native communities. Invasive alien plants can displace native species, degrade wildlife habitat, and alter ecosystem functioning.

The fire season can be extended and areas not prone to fire can become flammable. Entire vegetation types may be undesirably converted. Finally, alien invaders alter the visual landscape, degrading aesthetic values and giving park visitors a false perspective on the natural history of the Santa Monica Mountains.

The NPS mandate is to manage lands under its stewardship in a manner that sustains natural biotic associations and fosters healthy, sustainable plant and animal communities. In so doing the aesthetic and recreational enjoyment of visitors is improved and negative ecological and aesthetic impacts from alien species is minimized through effective control and eradication coupled with restoration of disturbed areas.

To achieve this, the park would develop and implement a comprehensive alien plant management plan to control and check the most pernicious alien species.

Westlake before Triunfo Canyon Road was cut (photo by Ed Lawrence).

programs among federal, state and local agencies and the private sector to manage, restore, and maintain natural processes.

- Develop scientific geographic information data to inform decision-making concerning appropriate parkland development. Share geographic information data with private landowners and local agencies to promote and support sustainable development in the Santa Monica Mountains.
- Work with private landowners and local agencies to promote and perpetuate biological diversity through development density strategies, such as buffer areas adjacent to significant park resources.
- Preserve the cultural history of the Santa Monica Mountains, and encourage cooperative cultural resource stewardship with private landowners and other federal, state, and local agencies.
- Evaluate potentially eligible ethnographic sites, traditional cultural properties, buildings, structures, and cultural landscapes for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as required by the National Historic Preservation Act. Manage according to policy and legislation. Develop interpretive programs to educate the public about their significance and to solicit public and private assistance in preservation efforts.
- Encourage cooperation between land managing agencies, local organizations, and private landowners to protect and preserve ethnographic and historic resources.
- Create a shared curatorial facility for the three agencies to preserve the baseline data of the natural and cultural resources and museum collections. Develop a process to protect significant resource collections that would include resources recovered from private lands.
- Develop influential museum partnerships with other agencies and institutions, and the Friends of Satwiwa.
- Conduct consultations and oral histories with Native American Indians and other ethnic groups with historical ties to the Santa Monica Mountains to improve understanding of cultural resources.

- Establish an ongoing dialogue and partnership with state and local governments, agencies, jurisdictions, and private landowners to promote shared responsibilities to protect open space and habitat, recreation trails, ethnographic and historical resources, and scenic vistas.

Land Use and Ownership Goals

- Make the NPS, CSP and SMMC built environments work in harmony with the natural environment. Use aesthetically pleasing and compatible design principles.
- Apply sustainable design to minimize the short and long term environmental impacts of NPS, CSP and SMMC development. Use resource conservation, recycling, waste minimization, and energy-efficient and ecologically responsible materials and techniques for construction when feasible.
- Work with private landowners and other agencies to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of using public funding to restore buildings destroyed by natural disasters in areas of known high hazards (e.g., flood zones, high fire hazard zones, earthquake fault zones, and landslide zones).
- Be a good neighbor to the other landowners, helping to protect their interests and rights by taking into account their individual concerns.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND PRACTICES

THE COST OF CONSTRUCTING and operating facilities and programs in the National Park Service has come under increasing scrutiny. Regardless, people are looking to the National Park Service for leadership in developing and promoting more sustainable and environmentally-friendly programs.

To meet this challenge, each alternative would incorporate goals for planning and constructing facilities and operating programs that are sustainable and compatible with environment. Examples include development that harmonizes with the environment, architectural styles that reflect the cultural heritage, and programs that promote recycling and low-energy use.

Implementing these principles and practices would enable the park to provide environmental leadership through example. To this end, a strategy would be developed that uses environmental audits, expands partnerships with environmental groups and agencies, creates a "green practices" handbook, adopts a "green" purchasing program, and transitions operations to a paperless environment.

Visitor Experience Goals

- Complete the Backbone Trail and manage as a scenic corridor to provide non-motorized to diverse points of opportunity for recreation, interpretation, and appreciation involving natural and cultural resources.
- Anticipate and manage potential conflicts among recreational uses. Appropriately enhance the visitor experience and provide a safe and conflict-free environment.
- Accord privacy for the traditional and ceremonial uses of the park's ethnographic resources. Although visitors would gain an appreciation of the Native American Indian history and culture, do not draw attention to the most sensitive of the park's resources.
- Create a seamless, enjoyable, and safe experience for visitors.
- Make facilities, programs and services of the recreation area reasonably accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.
- Encourage private enterprise to provide many of the necessary services and recreational developments to support visitor enjoyment of the national recreation area. Encourage compatible recreational, educational, research, and other facilities on appropriate private lands as a part of and adjacent to the national recreation area.
- Plan and develop appropriate recreation and education facilities and amenities necessary to promote and support an enjoyable and safe recreation experience in the national recreation area.

Children participating in the biodiversity program at Satwiwa (NPS photo).

Education and Interpretation Goals

- Provide an educational outreach program to instruct participants on the functions, issues, opportunities and value of the ecosystem in an expanding urban community. A formal component of this outreach program would be developed in partnership with the local educational system.
- Request that members of distinct cultural communities provide interpretation and education programs.
- Encourage safe and enjoyable resource use and protection. Place information and interpretation at appropriate locations throughout the recreation area and nearby communities. Visitors with differing levels of interest and understanding would easily find the area's cultural and natural features, visitor facilities, activities, and services.
- Create an experience that may increase visitor appreciation and awareness of the environment and historic sites within the SMMNRA and their place in the history of California.
- Place visitor contact facilities strategically at several locations within the recreation area to detail significant stories and provide information and directions to sites and activities.

Access and Transportation Goals

- Make SMMNRA facilities universally accessible to people of all abilities when possible.

PARTNERSHIPS

THE 1997 MISSION STATEMENT for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area addresses the significance of partnerships as follows:

> *The park is a cooperative experiment in resource protection and environmental education with non-federal partners, whose successes would enhance the region's quality of life and provide lessons learned to other national park units increasingly challenged by the forces of urbanization.*

Cooperative efforts with regional planning agencies and municipalities have resulted in an ever-expanding trail system that links municipal parks with the state and federal parks. Watershed protection committees have been working synergistically for over five years to improve water quality and protect endangered species such as the southern steelhead trout and the tidewater goby.

Partnerships also make economic sense. The actions and achievements realized through an ongoing cooperative partnership among the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), the California State Parks (CSP), and the National Park Service (NPS) during the last year are estimated to be $740,000. The bulk of savings were realized through reduced personnel services costs. Other savings included technical services and contracts, equipment, utilities, and supplies. These savings represent a 23 percent increase over the previous year in savings.

In addition to the economic benefits of partnerships, education efforts are improved and involve the community through active volunteer programs. The Mountains Education Program (MEP) coordinates the Recreational Transit Program (RTP), which provides Los Angeles schools with low cost transportation to parks. MEP coordination of this program permits NPS and MEP educators to focus on offering education programs to schoolchildren. Last year, NPS redirected funds to education programs that would have otherwise been expended on transportation coordination needs. The equestrian Mounted Assistance Unit (MAU) was formed over 25 years ago as the first volunteer patrol program in the Santa Monica Mountains. It continues to patrol the parklands on horseback. The Mountain Bike Patrol Unit (MBU) provides resource and visitor assistance patrols on public lands within the recreation area. The MBU program currently has more than 100 active volunteers.

- Promote development of efficient transportation to the SMMNRA from locations throughout southern California, as well as within the park.
- Work with state and local agencies and the public to ensure that environmentally sensitive development and maintenance of public roads in the mountains occurs.
- Work with the surrounding communities to improve adjoining trail systems as a means of access to the national recreation area.
- Make the recreation area accessible to a greater portion of the public by providing a wider range of transportation alternatives.
- Encourage surrounding communities to expand their transit systems into the park by modifying existing visitor facilities and developing new facilities that are accessible to large transit vehicles.
- Educate the public about the benefits of using transportation alternatives.
- Involve the surrounding communities in a cooperative effort to develop partnerships to assist in funding transportation alternatives and achieving common transportation objectives.
- Explore the feasibility of providing a low-emission shuttle system within the park.
- Improve the air quality by encouraging the use of alternative forms of transportation and the use of alternative fuels, including the conversion of park vehicles to low-emission fuel sources and financial incentives for employee use of public transportation.
- Work with surrounding communities to reduce visually intrusive overhead power and telephone lines and street lighting along scenic roadway corridors within the national recreation area.
- Redesign existing trailhead parking facilities and build new ones in known areas of congestion to increase capacity and efficiency and provide for growing levels of visitor use.

Operations Goals

- Develop and implement a preventative maintenance program for all historic structures and cultural landscapes.
- Coordinate operational resources to foster better protection of resources and services to the visitor.
- Develop uniform rules and regulations to the extent possible among the agencies.
- Promote the use of private sector operators and concessionaires to provide recreational services to meet growing demand.
- Utilize information management and telecommunication technology to promote rapid, reliable and efficient park operations and visitor services.
- Provide for increased use and appreciation of museum collections by staff of all agencies, researchers and the public.
- Achieve sustainability in all park operations and development of park related facilities, resulting in cost savings and reduced impacts on park resources.
- Recognize and enhance the opportunities for creating partnerships and sharing responsibilities with state and local governments and the private sector for protecting resources and providing recreational and educational services in ways appropriate to the rules, authorities, and capabilities of the partners.

Administrative Commitments

National Park Service

While the National Park Service "oversees" the SMMNRA, it currently has direct responsibility for only about 15 percent

of the land within the boundary. The NPS is a partner, sharing stewardship with the public, other agencies and private landowners. The National Park Service provides for the operation, maintenance, resource management, and resource and visitor protection on all NPS lands. The legislation establishing the 150,000-acre national recreation area emphasizes cooperative relationships. Thus, NPS has a less direct but very clear duty to support activities on non-NPS lands consistent with the purposes of the SMMNRA.

Relationships with Other Agencies

Other opportunities for cooperative management of the recreation area exist outside the working relationship among the principal park agencies in the SMMNRA. Seventy local, state and federal agencies exercise oversight and permitting activities within recreation area boundaries. Some agencies provide very specific services that are, nonetheless, key opportunities for cooperation and mutual assistance.